

A ONE-PERSON EXHIBITION:
AN INVESTIGATION OF PROBLEMS IN THE
PRODUCTION, SELECTION, PRESENTATION, AND INSTALLATION

PROBLEM IN LIEU OF THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

For the past two years during the course of my graduate study, I have been concerned with the combination of curvilinear organic shapes and geometric inorganic shapes and have incorporated this imagery in my paintings, drawings, and prints. My expression is a personal and spontaneous response to people I recognize after the imagery begins to develop. The paintings and drawings have been executed on a two-dimensional surface with a combination of acrylics and spray paint, oil colors on canvas, and other mixed media on paper. The prints have been executed from the intaglio process, the lithograph process, and the collograph process, in both black and white and in color.

In this creative project, I investigated the problems of producing, selecting, presenting, and installing a one-person exhibition. I executed a series of 31 drawings, paintings and prints from which 21 pieces for the exhibit were selected. From the body of work executed prior to and during my graduate study, 21 pieces were included based upon the relative quality of the imagery. There were no restrictions with regard to media or size. My goal in this project was to assemble and present a coherent and harmonious exhibit in the North Texas State University art gallery.

The project began as a studio project considering each piece individually, and culminated in a one-person exhibition contemplating the unity of the body of work.

The problems of a one-person exhibition are those that every artist should be aware of and attempt to resolve. I feel mutual consideration should be given to the body of work, as well as to each individual piece, emphasizing visual and aesthetic qualities. It was my intention to organize these works into an interrelated whole.

Method of Gathering Data

During this investigation, I kept a written log of the process from the selection of the pieces through the presentation and installation of the pieces. My data was drawn from the works themselves, the attendant log, photographs of the selected pieces, and photographs of the space and the final installation.

An analysis of the content of the log and of the works was drawn with consideration given to the quality of the individual works and the relationship of each work to one another, so that the end result was a coherent and harmonious presentation.

CHAPTER II

THE EXHIBITION

Production

The production of the works of art for this one-person exhibition has been of interest to me for the past two years. While new paintings and prints were created specifically for this exhibition, other works from my graduate study and one piece from my undergraduate study were included to create a comprehensive exhibition. As a means of recording data of the creative process in the studio and of the installation in the gallery, a journal was maintained.

In paintings which had been executed prior to the project pieces, during a period from January to May of 1977, and which had been as large as 8 feet by 14 feet, the imagery showed activity between the images and related with the environment or negative space. I had begun to employ the use of borders on unstretched canvas. The picture plane remained straight-edged, which contrasted with the irregular frayed outer edge, while the outer edge corresponded with the interior spontaneous drawing and painting techniques seen in such pieces as "Untitled I" (slide no. 16), "Untitled II" (slide no. 25), and "Untitled III" (slide no. 27). Each piece was primed in one color so that the border related to the base color of the piece. The paintings were

spontaneous; however, they lacked the value contrast and clarity required to give the imagery strength.

In the black and white lithographs (slide nos. 31-32, 38) which had been completed before the project began, I had begun to relate the outer edge to the negative space as seen in "Gertrude Searches for a Contact, I" (slide no. 31), "An Angel in Purgatory, I" (slide no. 32), and "The Race for the Rapture, I" (slide no. 38). In the hand-colored lithographs, my intention was for the relationship between the outer edge and the negative space to correspond, as in the paintings mentioned above, and for the imagery to retain the spontaneity that was present in the paintings. The flexibility of the drawing medium in lithography lent itself to the loose spontaneous imagery. The sharp contrast of the black and white lithograph remained after applying the oil colors, as in "Gertrude Searches for a Contact, II" (slide no. 14). The broad range of value gave more strength to the character and personality of the creature-like imagery than in the paintings.

In my earlier graduate work the imagery in the paintings, when executed on a small scale, became tight and was without spontaneity.

During the period from June to September of 1977, the project pieces (slide nos. 8-12, 20-23, 28-30, 33-37, 39-42) were created specifically for the exhibition. The relationship between the paintings and the prints became of

increasing interest. The continuing concern was with the inter-relationships of the creature-like imagery, the broad value range to create high contrast, and the correspondence between the border and the negative space in the small paintings and prints. An adequate body of large paintings already existed and a need for a range in size for transition and variety in the show also was necessary.

The production began with the execution of eleven paintings. The variation in size was considered initially, followed by the individual consideration of each piece. "Untitled V," 14 inches by 16 inches (slide no. 21), "Gertrude Searches for Sweet Wine," 20 inches by 26 inches (slide no. 23), "Journey from Kadish," 21½ inches by 26 inches (slide no. 22), "Victory With the Armour," 21½ inches by 25½ inches (slide no. 8), "Untitled VI," 20 inches by 26 inches (slide no. 43), "Out and Trodden Under Foot," 14 inches by 16 inches (slide no. 9), "Nights in the Belly of the Whale," 18 inches by 27 inches (slide no. 10), "Calamity Befalls the Unrighteous," 21 inches by 32 inches (slide no. 11), "Untitled IV," 15½ inches by 16 inches (slide no. 12), and "From Egypt Out of the House of Bondage," 30 inches by 33 inches (slide no. 20), were executed on unstretched white primed canvas with borders. The width of the borders varied with the consideration of each piece individually. The canvas was primed white to contrast with the sand walls of the gallery and to create

variation from the unstretched large canvases that were primed in color. Some had frayed, slightly irregular edges while others had clean cut edges. The white borders created an intense contrast and increased the activity and boldness of the imagery. The use of black and dark color on the white surface produced an effect similar to the hand-colored lithographs.

In printmaking, the concern for incorporating a more expansive use of media and for further clarification of the imagery with the lithographs evolved. For some time, I had been interested in exploring the collograph medium and using it with the lithographs to give the imagery color and texture.

Five black and white lithograph editions of six were produced. For each edition, a corresponding collograph plate was created. Household materials and hardware such as string, yarn, rubber bands, styrofoam, sponge, hair pins, belt buckles, cheesecloth, and corrugated fasteners on the collograph plate were used to create texture, line and to emboss the surface of the print.

For each edition of lithographs, the collograph plate was hand-colored differently. To further vary the creative process and to create the illusion of texture and space, the use of collage was employed. Torn pieces of additional collographs were glued to some of the lithograph/collograph pieces, as seen in "Untitled III" (slide no. 28), "Untitled

IV" (slide no. 29), "Untitled V" (slide no. 30), and "These are Going Forth to the Four Winds of Heaven" (slide no. 37). Out of the five lithograph editions, twenty final mono-prints were executed; 15 of which combined the lithograph with the collograph, and 5 of which were collograph with hand-applied prisma-color. Of these 20 prints, 12 were included in the exhibition. As a result of this exploration in combining the two print media, I found the beginnings of an added dimension and a new direction in my work. Working with mono-prints allowed for more creative freedom with the technical processes. These prints became more diverse in comparison with the earlier hand-colored lithographs. In individual pieces some shapes were further clarified with the use of black and white, and contrasted with shapes abstracted by the color, line, and texture of the collograph plate. The two processes combined created an interesting tension, variation, and illusion of space with each piece, with the use of opaque and translucent color in line and value over the bold black and white lithographs.

Selection

The selection of the paintings and prints was based on the individual quality or success of the work with equal consideration given to the contribution of the individual work to the unity of the exhibition.

For the past two and one-half years, I had been working with the same creature-like imagery so that all the

pieces worked together thematically.

In selecting the pieces for the exhibition, standards in variation in size, variation in presentation, color, color compliments and variables, and synthesis of drawing and painting techniques in the same piece were all taken into consideration.

Some pieces were selected immediately because of the scale of the works. "Deliverance from the Hand of the Wicked" (slide no. 5), "Out of the Land of Egypt in Hurried Flight" (slide no. 3), and "Even a Sparrow Finds a Home" (slide no. 24) were selected as a result of their large scale and because they would evenly break up the space in the gallery. Large scale unstretched pieces such as "Untitled I" (slide no. 16), "Untitled II" (slide no. 25), and "Untitled III" (slide no 27) were also selected automatically because of their scale and because the diptych painting and the two triptics with their borders contributed variation with the more formally framed canvases. The six large paintings made way for the exhibition to be structured around them.

The selection came very easily in the beginning and was almost an intuitive process. However, as the selection progressed, careful attention had to be given because of the strong activity in each piece and the conflict in color when placed side by side. The original selection consisted of 56 pieces, which included prints, drawings, paintings, and

pieces that combined drawing and painting techniques. The selection was eventually reduced to 42 pieces as the installation progressed.

Early prints (slide nos. 1, 4, 6, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19) were selected for the fixed walls of the gallery because of their more subdued color in comparison with the later prints. The intense color and active lines in the large paintings on the fixed walls competed with the vibrant colors in the later prints. These 9 selected prints had been framed, and when placed on both sides of the large pieces, produced a pleasing symmetrical balance as well as a transition from the informal unstretched large canvases. The prints (slide nos. 28-42) were selected primarily because of the color varieties and texture achieved and because of the size. They were unframed and lent visual vitality to the panels set up in the central gallery area.

The small scale paintings produced specifically for the show (slide nos. 7-12, 20-23) were selected to hang in unity composed in clusters on the fixed walls of the gallery. These paintings which were from 14 inches by 16 inches to 36 inches by 33 inches in size were selected because of their variation in scale from the large paintings; their strong contrast in value; and because of their similarity in size, color and value to the prints. As unstretched pieces, their presentation was a variation from the formally framed prints

on the fixed walls and yet still transitional from the large unstretched pieces in size, color, and value.

"Fifth Avenue at Five O'Clock" (slide no. 2) and "Journey to Springs of Living Water" (slide no. 26) were the last paintings that were selected. Their intermediate and comparable scale, and more subtle color, presented variation and good symmetrical balance.

The pieces seen in the list of illustrations (slide nos. 1-42) are the final forty-two works selected for the exhibition. Both the paintings and the prints are rich and varied in color, content, scale, media and presentation. The works selected for this exhibition are not only successful individually, but they are successful collectively. The selection process was the most important resolution of the creative project, and I learned a great deal about selecting work individually as well as inclusively so that a cohesive exhibition was the end result.

Presentation

The problem of presentation defined two areas for consideration: the presentation of the individual pieces and the presentation of the assembled works. The presentation of the group of works was directed in such a way as to present some transition with a uniform consistency between the individual pieces and the total body of work. The individual piece and its aesthetic requirements, as well as

the presentation in terms of the total exhibition to achieve both a sense of unity and a sense of variety, were considered.

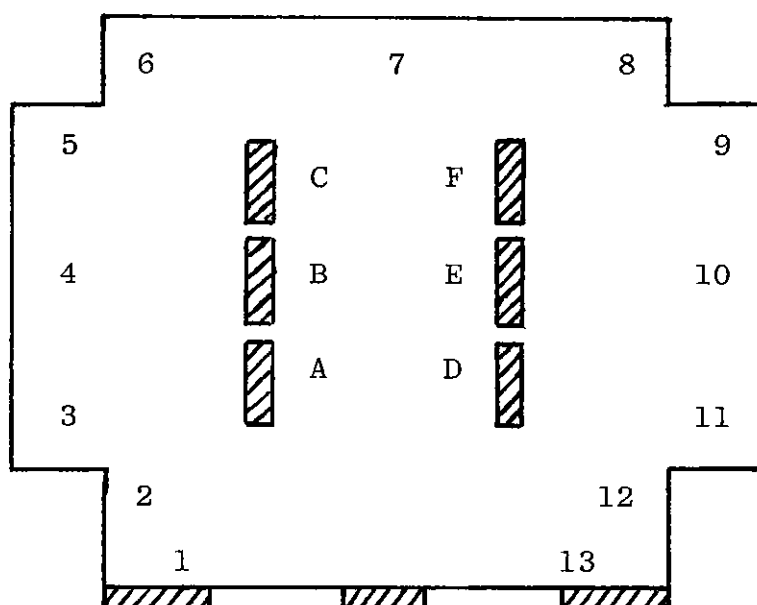
Four methods were used in the presentation. The paintings (slide nos. 7, 8-12, 16, 20-23, 25, 27) were unstretched and attached to the fixed walls with clear plastic push-pins. Their white borders related to the underground white of the paintings, contributed a strong contrast with the dark value areas, and created a variation from the framed prints, which were of comparable scale. The large paintings (slide nos. 16, 25, 27) were presented in the same manner because of the relativity of the free-edged border to the piece. Others were stretched and framed with mitered lattice board, which was rubbed with acrylic paint to relate individually with each piece, as seen in the paintings (slide nos. 2, 3, 5, 24, 26). The prints that were selected were all mounted on backings and matted with white pebbleboard. Two intaglio prints and six hand-colored lithographs (slide nos. 4, 6, 13-15, 17-19) were placed in chrome frames with glass for the fixed walls in the gallery. The remaining 16 prints (slide nos. 1, 28-42) were mounted on the panels with individual corresponding glass sheets and clear simply designed plastic fasteners.

The overall presentation of the works was an interesting problem. The resolution provided both variation and uniformity which can be seen in the installation (slide nos. 44-61).

Installation

The installation of the exhibition began Saturday, October 1, at 10:00 a.m., and ended on Monday, October 3, at 3:00 p.m. The installation took approximately nineteen hours.

The University Gallery of the Art Department at North Texas State University utilizes a modulated Greek cross floor plan. The walls are covered with a vinyl covering that has the appearance of sand-colored linen. Reference will be made to the walls as numbers 1-13, and to the six panels as A, B, C, D, E, F as seen in the following diagram:



The installation of the exhibition began with the work laid out on the floor, and the arrangement started to take place. The largest unstretched paintings (slide nos. 16, 25) were switched back and forth from wall no. 7 to wall no. 10 until it was decided which painting would work with less conflict on wall no. 7 with the other pieces for the show. After "Untitled I" (slide no. 16) was centered and attached to wall no. 7 and "Untitled II" (slide no. 25) was attached to wall no. 10, the arrangement of the remaining paintings began. The green background of the triptic piece on wall no. 10 conflicted in color with most of the other work; therefore, it was installed on the side wall. Another large painting was necessary for a symmetrical balance and "Deliverance From the Hand of the Wicked" (slide no. 5) was centrally placed on wall no. 4, the third large wall in the gallery. On walls no. 5 and no. 9 two pieces equal in scale to each other and compatible in color with "Untitled I" (slide no. 16) were necessary to carry out the symmetry. "Rocks are a Refuge for the Badgers" (slide no. 7) was installed on wall no. 5, and "Even a Sparrow Finds a Home" (slide no. 24) was installed on wall no. 9 as the resolution. Both pieces were also compatible with the side walls of the gallery. "Out of the Land of Egypt in Hurried Flight" (slide no. 3) was installed on wall no. 3, and "Journey to Springs of Living Water" (slide no. 26) was installed on wall no. 11. "Fifth Avenue at Five O'Clock" (slide no. 2),

an early painting in the beginning stages of the imagery, was installed in the front of the gallery on wall no. 2. On the opposite side on wall no. 12, a recent unstretched piece, "Untitled III" (slide no. 27), was installed. This completed the installation of all the larger works. The framed prints were then placed around the large pieces on the fixed walls. "Untitled I" (slide no. 4) and "Untitled II" (slide no. 6), two intaglio color prints, were installed on wall no. 4 on either side of "Deliverance From the Hand of the Wicked." Six hand-colored lithographs were placed on the back wall on either side of the centrally located large piece (slide no. 16). "An Angel in Purgatory, II," "Gertrude Searches For a Contact, II," and "Thou Hast Loosed the Sackcloth" (slides nos. 13-15) were installed to the left of the large painting on wall no. 7; and "Thou Hast Turned Her Mourning into Dancing," "Revelation Through a Dream," and "The Valley of Achor - A Place for Herds to Lie Down" (slide nos. 17-19) were installed to the right of "Untitled I," thus completing the three large walls. The small paintings created for the exhibition were arranged in two clusters to complete a composition for the two back adjacent walls of the gallery. A group of five paintings (slide nos. 20-23) were installed on wall no. 8. The light box situated on wall no. 1, to the right of the door as one is leaving the gallery, created a problem which was resolved by installing

a small intaglio color print (slide no. 1) on the far right of the wall; thus completing the fixed walls of the gallery.

The interior of the gallery space was divided by movable panels. Six panels were placed in the interior space to create two walls of three panels each. Three panels were installed to the center right area of the gallery parallel to wall no. 10. And three panels were installed symmetrically on the opposite side parallel to wall no. 4. Each set of panels, wall A, B, C and wall D, E, F, was spaced approximately eight inches apart in order to leave space for partial visual movement between each set, but not for physical passage. The panels further divided the space adding focal points and creating a new dimension in the gallery. The two walls of panels closed in the central space of the gallery and focused attention on the large unstretched piece on the back wall no. 7. The viewer, when entering the gallery, was able to see the three major walls from a great distance. The prints were much smaller in scale and called for closer attention than the paintings, and the panels permitted a partially closed and more intimate area for viewing them.

Fifteen unframed matted prints were screwed to the panels with clear plastic fasteners and glass coverings. The side of the three panels D, E, F facing wall no. 10 invited simplicity and subdued colors as the intense color, and strong imagery of the pieces on wall nos. 9, 10, 11

could not compete with strong color without conflict. Three pastel colored collographs (slide nos. 40-42) were installed, one on each panel. The sides of the six panels A, B, C and D, E, F facing the center of the gallery held six large prints. On the centrally facing panels A, C, D and F, four vertical lithograph with collograph color prints (slide nos. 34, 36, 37, 39) were installed. On the centrally facing panel B, a horizontal color lithograph/collograph (slide no. 35) was installed. And to balance the piece on panel B and to break the monotony of color, a horizontal black and white lithograph (slide no. 38) was placed on the centrally facing side of panel E.

The side of the wall made up of panels A, B, and C facing the fixed wall no. 4 held six prints. On panel A facing wall no. 4, a large horizontal color lithograph/collograph collage (slide no. 29) was installed with a small horizontal color lithograph/collograph collage (slide no. 28) centered over it. "Gertrude Searches For a Contact, I," a vertical black and white lithograph (slide no. 31), was installed on panel B facing wall no. 4 with a small vertical color lithograph/collograph collage (slide no. 30). On panel C facing wall no. 4, a horizontal color lithograph/collograph was installed with a horizontal black and white lithograph centered over it, thus completing the installation of all the pieces.

Once the work had been installed, the identification and lighting of each piece began. Cards that had been typed with the title, medium, date, and the abbreviation for "price on request," were placed with duct tape to the right of each piece equal distance from the floor. A list of each piece was made up in consecutive order with a price and was given to the Art Office for inquirers. This procedure was utilized instead of typing the prices on the cards so that a person would contemplate the piece and not be distracted by the price.

The illumination of the work began the day of the opening, Monday, October 3, 1977. Two men who are employed by the Art Department for the gallery carried out the installation of lighting as directed. The gallery is lighted with bank lights along the top of the walls as well as with individual spot lights which slide into a track system from the interior area. Each piece was illuminated individually with a track light from the interior of the gallery. The lights were centered on each piece to avoid dark places and distortion of the work. The gallery supplies extra lights so additional spots were added to cover each piece. In this manner, the light hit each piece directly and evenly.

After the installation and lighting had been completed, the gallery was cleaned. A table was moved to the foyer of the gallery for refreshments for the opening which was scheduled for 6:00 p.m., Monday, October 3, 1977.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This creative project was one that focused on the problems of production, selection, presentation, and installation of a one-person exhibition. The functions in producing, selecting, and presenting works of art for exhibition are difficult to differentiate. The functions of each interrelate and are dependent on one another so that decisions must be met inclusively. Scale and presentation, as well as the medium, were all factors considered during the production of works for this creative project. And, many of the choices in selecting had to be made during the final installation.

The problem of production of the works of art for this one-person exhibition was one that I have been concerned with for the past two years. I produced eleven paintings and twenty prints for this creative project from which nine paintings and twelve prints were selected for the exhibition. The remaining twenty-one pieces of work for the show were produced during the period throughout my graduate study, with the exception of one piece which was executed during my undergraduate work.

From producing the work in the studio for the exhibition, I became increasingly concerned with the relationship

between the pieces and their proposed presentation. With the aim of a one-person exhibition in mind, I became more aware of the creative process and the ongoing decisions that were made. The choices made during the creation of the work has always been spontaneous, with little planning. The drawing and painting are done directly on the canvas, stone, or plate without a preconceived idea of the end product. Through the documentation of the process, by keeping a log, I became more aware of the way in which I work.

The selection of the art works for this exhibition relied upon the individual quality and success of each piece, as well as the contribution of each piece to the unity of the exhibition. In making selections of the works of art, I chose those pieces which represented variety in size, color, media, presentation, and collaboration. This selective process established a variation and progression in viewing the works as a whole.

The selection process was the most important resolution of the exhibition, and I learned a great deal about selecting work individually as well as inclusively so that a cohesive exhibition was the end result.

The presentation was a problem which was approached in two ways: the presentation of the piece individually, and the presentation of the union of works. Four methods of presentation were utilized for the exhibition. The paintings were presented stretched and framed as well as

unstretched and pinned to the wall. And the prints were all matted, some presented with frames and others with a glass covering installed with clear plastic fasteners. Some of the prints were framed in the studio; however, most of the works were collectively presented during the installation. All of the paintings were presented on the fixed walls of the gallery with the framed prints, and the unframed prints were attached to the gallery's interior panels. Most of the paintings were large and called for viewing distance. This method of presentation enabled the viewer to view the paintings at a great distance and to examine the smaller prints in a more intimate partially closed space.

The installation was a simple problem which had a clear resolution, due to the gallery's symmetrical cross floor plan and the symmetrical quality of the works as a whole. The interior panels were installed symmetrically in the central gallery area to create two walls and to simply divide the space for the prints. The panels served to create focal points and to draw attention to certain pieces in the show. This division gave variety to the space, related to the works, and brought about a continuity for the body of works. The panels permitted one to view the paintings from a distance and prompted one to investigate the prints at a closer range.

A one-person exhibition is a problem that every artist must encounter at some time during his career. From

producing, selecting, presenting, and installing works for this one-person exhibition, I have gained valuable and extensive information that contributes to my work as an artist. The log that was maintained throughout the project documents every procedure in detail. The data gathered was invaluable in aiding me to understand myself and my imagery. Key words as to thought and descriptive details of the processes and problems were notated. I became more aware of my thoughts and their correspondence to the found identity of the images. The log not only revealed helpful information regarding the studio activities, but proved to be beneficial to the ongoing process of selecting, presenting, and installing the exhibition.

The exhibition was an attempt to present a compatible and cohesive show. The works were successful individually as well as inclusively. When the works were assembled, they related with compatibility and variety, thus achieving a cohesive exhibition.

This exhibition revealed to me the importance of exhibition in depth, retrospectively. It provided the opportunity not only to exhibit extensively to the public, but allowed for my discovery of a new direction in my work. I learned that the creative process does not culminate with the completion of a piece, but that it continues beyond the individual presentation of work through the installation of each piece. With the completion of the creative project, I

discovered that the imagery became more potent when supported by the body of works. And, although the imagery was similar, it was diverse enough to give exciting variety. The scale of the pieces appeared to have little effect on the visual impact of individual pieces. The small works appeared as strong as the large ones. Clarity became more emphasized in the later small paintings and prints; yet, the older pieces by comparison did not appear to be unclear.



















































































































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